Answer Key -- Consumer Rights

Chapter 5 · Economics

Reading Guide · Glossary · Comprehension · Practice Questions · 10 Puzzles

NCERT Companion Workbook · Based on “Understanding Economic Development, NCERT Class X”

Comprehension Questions -- Answered

Q1. Explain two ways in which sellers can exploit consumers in the marketplace, using examples from the chapter.

Answer: Sellers sometimes weigh goods less than the amount actually charged for, quietly cheating buyers on quantity without their knowledge. In other cases, companies pass on false information through advertising, such as a company that for years claimed powdered baby milk was superior to mother's milk before being forced to admit the claim was false. Both practices exploit the fact that individual buyers usually lack the resources or information to challenge a large, powerful seller. This imbalance of power is exactly why the chapter argues rules and organised consumer action are necessary.

Q2. What factors led to the birth of the organised consumer movement in India?

Answer: Widespread food shortages, hoarding, black marketing and adulteration of essential items like food and edible oil created serious public frustration in the 1960s. Before this, consumers who felt cheated had little choice but to simply stop buying from a particular seller, since no legal protection system existed. Consumer organisations initially focused on writing articles and holding exhibitions to raise awareness, gradually evolving into a stronger, more organised movement. This sustained pressure eventually helped bring about the Consumer Protection Act in 1986, which gave consumers a formal legal route for justice.

Q3. Using the case of Reji Mathew, explain the consumer's right to safety.

Answer: Reji suffered permanent brain-related harm due to improperly administered anaesthesia during a routine tonsil operation, showing a serious failure of care by the hospital. The right to safety means consumers should be protected from goods and services that are hazardous to life, and hospitals and other providers are expected to strictly follow safety procedures. When Reji's father pursued the case through the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, the hospital was eventually held responsible for medical negligence and ordered to pay compensation. This case shows both the seriousness of safety violations and how the redressal system can hold providers accountable.

Q4. Describe the three-tier structure of India's consumer dispute redressal system.

Answer: The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission handles cases involving claims up to one crore rupees and is the first point of filing a complaint. If a consumer is not satisfied with the district decision, or if the claim is larger, the case can move to the State Commission, which handles claims between one crore and ten crore rupees. Claims above ten crore rupees, or appeals from state-level decisions, go to the National Commission. This tiered structure lets consumers pursue justice at a scale matching their claim while also allowing appeals if a lower level ruling seems unfair.

Q5. What role do certification marks like ISI, Agmark and Hallmark play for consumers?

Answer: These marks are issued by organisations that set quality standards and allow producers to display the logo only if they meet those standards. They give consumers a quick way to judge whether a product is likely to be safe and reliable without needing to test it themselves. For most goods, following these standards is voluntary, but for products affecting health and safety, such as LPG cylinders or packaged drinking water, certification is made compulsory. This shows certification is one practical tool, alongside laws and redressal commissions, for protecting consumers in everyday purchases.

Q6. What challenges continue to limit the effectiveness of India's consumer movement, according to the chapter?

Answer: The redressal process can be slow, costly and cumbersome, often requiring consumers to hire lawyers and attend multiple hearings over time. Since most retail purchases are small and cash memos are often not issued, consumers frequently lack the evidence needed to support a formal complaint. Out of thousands of consumer groups in India, only a small fraction are genuinely well-organised and active in pursuing cases. These practical barriers mean

that although consumer awareness is spreading, real participation in the movement still depends heavily on the effort and persistence of individual consumers.

Short-Answer Practice -- Model Answers

Q1. What year was the Consumer Protection Act enacted in India?

Answer: 1986.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: it followed years of consumer movement pressure demanding a formal legal mechanism to address unfair trade practices.*

Q2. What is the right to safety?

Answer: The right to be protected against goods and services that are hazardous to life and property.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: this right places responsibility on producers to follow safety standards, since individual consumers cannot test every product themselves.*

Q3. What does MRP stand for and why does it matter to consumers?

Answer: Maximum Retail Price, the highest price a seller can legally charge for a product.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: printing MRP on the pack protects consumers from being overcharged and gives them a fixed reference point to check against what they are billed.*

Q4. Which commission handles consumer claims exceeding ten crore rupees?

Answer: The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: the three-tier system assigns higher-value claims to higher-level commissions, reserving the National Commission for the largest disputes and appeals.*

Q5. Why is Agmark certification mandatory for some products but not others?

Answer: Because it is compulsory only for products that directly affect health and safety or are consumed on a mass scale.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: making certification compulsory for high-risk or widely used goods protects the largest number of consumers where the potential harm is greatest.*

Q6. What was the outcome of Abirami's case against the coaching institute?

Answer: The commission ordered a partial refund and later fined the institute further for a frivolous appeal.

Reasoning: *Reasoning: this shows the redressal system upheld her right to choose whether to continue a service and penalised the institute for resisting a fair claim.*

Objective Practice

A. Multiple Choice Questions

1. The Consumer Protection Act, popularly known as COPRA, was enacted in

a) 1975

✓ b) 1986

c) 1991

d) 2005

2. National Consumers' Day in India is observed on

a) 15 August

b) 26 January

✓ **c) 24 December**

d) 2 October

3. The right that protects consumers from hazardous goods and services is called the right to

a) information

b) choice

✓ **c) safety**

d) redressal

4. MRP printed on a package refers to the

a) minimum retail price

✓ **b) maximum retail price**

c) manufacturing reference price

d) market regulation price

5. Which commission handles consumer claims up to one crore rupees?

✓ **a) District Commission**

b) State Commission

c) National Commission

d) Supreme Court

6. A logo confirming quality standards for edible oil and cereals is called

a) ISI

✓ **b) Agmark**

c) Hallmark

d) RTI

7. The Right to Information Act was enacted in India in

a) 1986

b) 2000

✓ **c) 2005**

d) 2019

8. COPRA was significantly amended to strengthen consumer protection in

a) 1991

b) 2005

✓ **c) 2019**

d) 2000

9. Hallmark certification in India is associated with

a) packaged food

✓ **b) jewellery**

c) electronics

d) medicines

10. Rampant food shortages, hoarding and adulteration in the 1960s mainly led to the rise of

a) the WTO

✓ **b) the consumer movement in India**

c) the SHG movement

d) liberalisation policy

B. True or False

1. The Consumer Protection Act was enacted in 1986. -- TRUE
2. A consumer has no right to demand compensation for a defective product. -- FALSE
3. The District Commission handles the largest claims in the redressal system. -- FALSE
4. ISI and Agmark are examples of certification marks that assure product quality. -- TRUE
5. Certification is mandatory for all products sold in India. -- FALSE
6. The Right to Information Act helps citizens access details about government functioning. -- TRUE
7. Consumers filing a case in a redressal commission must always hire a lawyer. -- FALSE
8. Only a small fraction of India's consumer groups are well organised and active. -- TRUE

C. Match the Following

Column A	Column B
1. Right to safety	a) Law that created the redressal commission system
2. Right to information	b) Handles claims up to one crore rupees
3. Right to choice	c) Handles claims exceeding ten crore rupees
4. District Commission	d) Certification for jewellery quality
5. National Commission	e) Freedom to decide whether to buy or continue a service
6. Agmark	f) Certification for edible oil and cereals
7. Hallmark	g) Knowing details about a purchased product
8. Consumer Protection Act 1986	h) Protection from hazardous goods and services

Answers: 1-h, 2-g, 3-e, 4-b, 5-c, 6-f, 7-d, 8-a

Higher-Order Thinking (HOTS) Questions -- Model Answers

Q1. A consumer buys a packaged snack with no expiry date printed on it and later falls ill. Using ideas from the chapter, explain which consumer rights are relevant and what steps the consumer could take.

Answer: The absence of an expiry date violates the consumer's right to information, since manufacturers are required to display key details like manufacturing and expiry dates on packaging. If the product caused illness, the right to safety is also relevant, since the good was not fit for safe consumption. The consumer could first complain to

the seller or manufacturer and, if unsatisfied, file a case in the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission seeking compensation. Keeping the purchase bill and packaging as evidence would strengthen the case, since lack of proof is a common obstacle described in the chapter.

Q2. Why does the chapter suggest that consumer awareness, not just laws, is essential for the consumer movement to succeed?

Answer: Even strong laws like COPRA only work if consumers actually know their rights and are willing to act on them when exploited. Many consumers do not insist on bills, check expiry dates, or verify certification marks, which weakens their ability to prove a complaint or even notice they have been cheated. The chapter's own self-assessment questionnaire on consumer habits shows that awareness of small precautions, like keeping receipts, directly affects whether a person can seek redress successfully. Laws create the pathway to justice, but only informed and active consumers can actually walk that pathway when something goes wrong.

Q3. Compare the redressal outcomes for Reji Mathew and Abirami. What do their cases together suggest about the range of situations the consumer commissions handle?

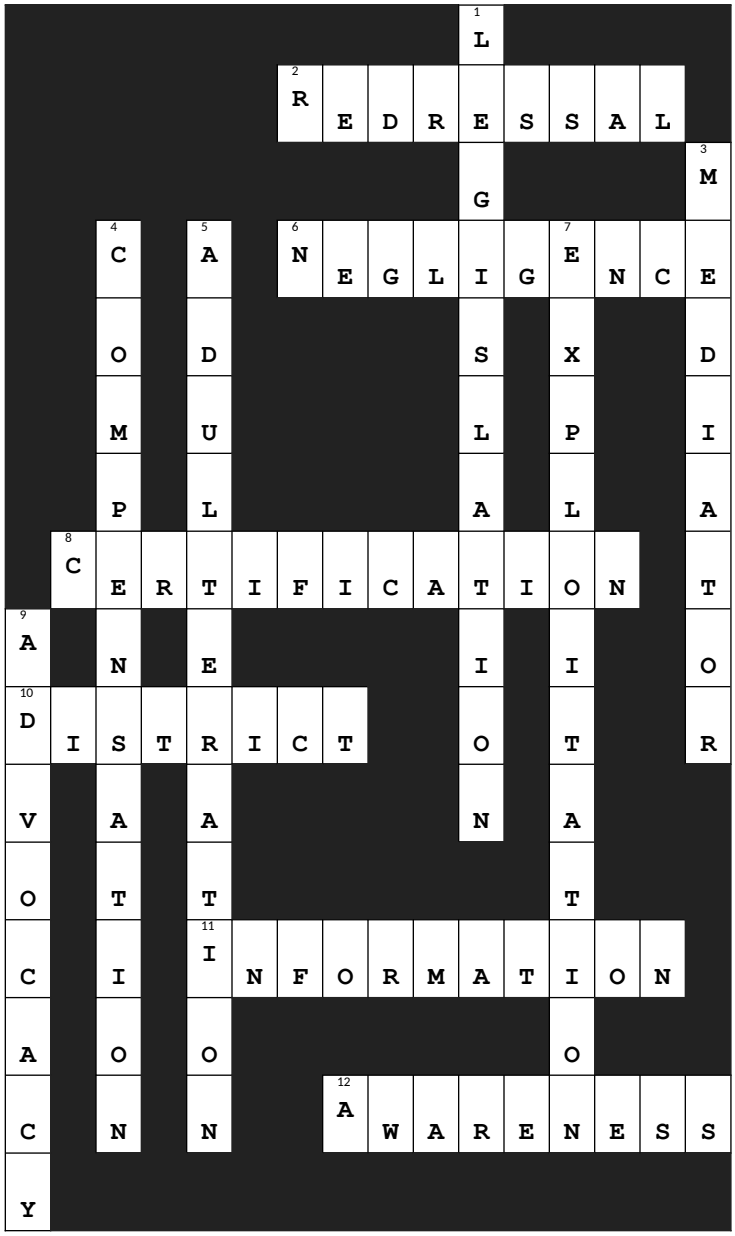
Answer: Reji Mathew's case involved severe physical harm from medical negligence and resulted in the National Commission awarding him compensation for a life-altering injury. Abirami's case involved a financial dispute over an educational service she chose to discontinue, and resulted in a partial refund plus penalties against the institute for resisting her claim. Together these cases show the commissions handle both serious safety failures and ordinary consumer choice disputes, treating both as legitimate consumer rights violations. This range demonstrates that the redressal system is meant to protect consumers across very different scales of harm, from life-changing injury to unfair service contracts.

Q4. Should certification marks like ISI or Agmark be made compulsory for all products, not just health and safety related ones? Discuss the tradeoffs.

Answer: Making certification compulsory for all goods could raise consumer confidence broadly, since buyers would always have a quick, trusted signal of quality regardless of the product category. However, compulsory certification for every product would raise costs and compliance burdens for small producers who may struggle to afford testing and certification processes. The chapter's approach of making certification mandatory only for products affecting health and safety, or those consumed at mass scale, balances consumer protection against the practical cost of universal compliance. A full mandate might improve overall market quality, but it risks pushing small, low-margin producers out of the formal market entirely, which is likely why the current system limits compulsion to higher-risk goods.

Puzzle Pack -- 10 Puzzles for This Chapter

1. Crossword


1 L
2 R E D R E S S A L
G
3 M
4 C
5 A
6 N E G L I G
7 E N C E
O D S X D
M U L P I
P L A L A
8 C E R T I F I C A T I O N T
9 A N E I I O
10 D I S T R I C T O T R
V A A N A
O T T T
11 I
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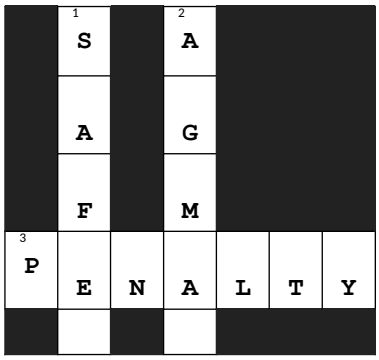
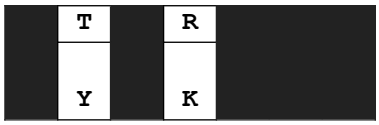
A O O O
C N N 12 A W A R E N E S S
Y

2. Mini Crossword





3. Word Search

N	O	I	T	A	L	S	I	G	E	L	N	X	R	D
B	T	T	N	O	I	T	A	T	I	O	L	P	X	E
K	C	N	K	R	A	M	G	A	I	R	M	S	L	N
R	I	E	I	S	A	F	E	T	Y	E	Y	S	A	E
A	R	M	O	N	A	F	A	C	D	M	T	E	S	G
M	T	E	W	X	F	R	H	I	I	U	N	N	S	L
L	S	V	O	A	E	O	A	O	Z	S	A	E	E	I
L	I	O	U	T	I	T	R	U	U	N	R	R	R	G
A	D	M	L	C	O	K	O	M	A	O	R	A	D	E
H	C	U	E	R	Q	B	P	X	A	C	A	W	E	N
W	D	Y	C	A	C	O	V	D	A	T	W	A	R	C
A	C	E	R	T	I	F	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	E
N	O	I	T	A	S	N	E	P	M	O	C	O	W	S
I	T	B	H	N	A	T	I	O	N	A	L	C	N	N
H	C	O	M	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	Y	W	B	T

4. Cryptogram

Encoded: UKSNQ XZI SNHXS UGHVFQ LUAFNOF OAZQKJNUQ BUAJ KZBXGU NMLSAGFXFGAZ.

Plain: Rules and legal rights protect consumers from unfair exploitation.

Key: A=O B=F C=Q D=Y E=V F=T G=I H=G I=D J=M K=U L=P M=X N=E O=C P=J Q=S R=K S=L T=Z U=R V=H W=B X=A Y=W Z=N

5. Caesar Coded Message

Encoded: OAZEGYQD DUSTFE. DGXQE MZP XQSMX DUSTFE BDAFQOF OAZEGYQDE RDAY GZRMUD QJBXAUFMFUAZ.

Plain: Consumer Rights. Rules and legal rights protect consumers from unfair exploitation.

Shift: 12

6. Word Scramble

1. TNYRRAWA → WARRANTY

2. TASOMOIPNNCE → COMPENSATION

3. NMOTINAIOFR → INFORMATION

4. EYFSAT → SAFETY

5. NTADSRAD → STANDARD

6. RSELADSER → REDRESSAL

7. NGGLENEEIC → NEGLIGENCE

8. OCVADYAC → ADVOCACY

9. ISMCOMNIOS → COMMISSION

10. RKAALHML → HALLMARK

7. Acrostic

R -- REDRESSAL

E -- EXPLOITATION

D -- DISTRICT

R -- CONSUMER

E -- EXPIRY

S -- STANDARD

S -- SAFETY

A -- ADULTERATION

L -- LEGISLATION

Theme: REDRESSAL

8. Match the Pairs

A → 8

B → 4

C → 1

D → 7

E → 3

F → 6

G → 5

H → 2

9. Fill in the Blanks

1. The lowest tier of the consumer dispute redressal system is the _____ commission. → DISTRICT

2. A person who buys goods or services for personal use is called a _____. → CONSUMER

3. A mark confirming a product meets official quality standards is a _____. → CERTIFICATION

4. Mixing impure substances into a product to cheat buyers is called _____. → ADULTERATION

5. Failure to take reasonable care that causes harm to a consumer is called _____. → NEGLIGENCE

6. Knowledge that helps consumers protect their own interests is called consumer _____. → AWARENESS

7. Payment made to cover loss or damage suffered by a consumer is called _____. → COMPENSATION

8. The formal process of correcting a wrong through legal action is called _____. → REDRESSAL

10. Odd One Out

1. Right to profit -- not one of the recognised consumer rights

2. MRP -- a price label, not a quality certification mark

3. Reserve Bank -- not part of the consumer redressal hierarchy

4. Amritha -- the case involving the Right to Information Act rather than a redressal commission